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DI/UbD Chapter 8

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Chapter 8 in DI/UbD has its focus on grading and reporting achievement, which will dovetail nicely with the chapters on assessments that we covered previously in MI. The chapter opens with the dichotomy that faces all teachers, how to we blend the teaching aspect with the grading or judging aspect of our jobs. Grades are seen as a two part process, the student gets the grade in the classroom for the work performed and the grade is then reported to the student and parent. The author quotes grading expert Ken O’Connor who points out that grades have to be more than simply a letter/number relationship; there has to be a better description of that what that letter/number stands for. When looking at grading evidence of learning it is important to eliminate all factors that interfere with a student’s ability to demonstrate knowledge. The normal A for excellent scale is out of proportion when considering the level of the class and the students in the class, and it can promote an unhealthy level of competition for the best grades. The author points out the clear distinction between grading and assessment. Assessment focuses on gathering the information about student achievement and grading is the final judgment of that achievement. The story about the old man with his feet on a block of ice is very relevant to how we need to consider grading and arriving at the final average for that student. What a student learns should always be more important than when he or she learns. The author describes how grades can be looked at in three categories. There should be grades for achievement for goals, progress toward goals and work habits. The final thought is that we should change from a report card but rather a reporting system, the system several options to report to students and parents their progress in the class.

The chapter on grading is a good follow up to the testing chapters from MI. This chapter tackles a very sensitive subject for both teachers and students alike. I found it interesting that the book is pushing for grading reforms and a move away from the traditional ‘A’ system. However, every school district in the country announces the Top Ten graduates, millions of dollars of scholarships and financial assistance in colleges are all based on g.p.a. or that standard they are pushing back against. Few classes offer the opportunity to receive an A by showing progress from the start of the class to the end of class. How best to integrate these ideas in my classroom and make these changes will be difficult, but it does pose a very intriguing situation as a student, and more so as a student in education.